Food for Thought

Competency Goals
Grade 8: Social Studies Goal 4
Math Goal 1

Objective
Students will compute percentages of increase in the food prices during the Civil War and will use the same increases to predict prices today if similar shortages and inflation were to occur.

Introduction
The Civil War caused great food shortages throughout North Carolina and many other states. With many farmers fighting in the war, fewer people were producing food. Those who were raising crops had to give a portion to Confederate agents for use in the war, further reducing supplies for those on the home front. The demand for this diminished food supply raised prices drastically and quickly. Protests and bread riots over the lack of food and high prices occurred in some cities, including Raleigh and Salisbury.

Materials

Copies of "Food for Thought" worksheet (one per student)
Math Activities Teacher Answer Key

Procedure
Give students a worksheet and have them work each math problem.

Food for Thought

Worksheet

The Civil War caused food shortages throughout North Carolina and many other states. With many farmers fighting in the war, fewer people were producing food. Those who did raise crops had to give a portion to Confederate agents for use in the war, further reducing supplies for those on the home front. The demand for this diminished food supply raised prices quickly and dramatically. Protests and bread riots over the lack of food and high prices occurred in some cities.

Raleigh Food Prices, 1862 – 1865

	1862	**1863**	**1864**	**1865**
Bacon (lb.)	$ .33	$1.00	$5.50	$7.50
Beef (lb.)	.12	.50	2.50	3.00
Pork (lb.)	_	1.60	4.00	5.50
Sugar (lb.)	.75	1.00	12.00	30.00
Corn (bu.)	1.10	5.50	20.00	30.00
Meal (bu.)	1.25	5.50	20.00	30.00
Potatoes (bu.)	1.00	4.00	7.00	30.00
Yams (bu.)	1.50	5.00	6.00	35.00
Wheat (bu.)	3.00	8.00	25.00	50.00
Flour (bbl.)	18.00	35.00	125.00	500.00

lb. = pound   bu. = bushel   bbl. = barrel

(From William K. Boyd, "Fiscal and Economic Conditions in North Carolina during the War," *North Carolina Booklet* [1915].)

Math Problems

1. What percent did the price of a bushel of wheat increase from 1862 to 1864? _____ %

   Between 1862 and 1865? _____ %

2. Graph the change in price of a bushel of corn between 1862 and 1865.

$30.00				
$25.00				
$20.00				
$15.00				
$10.00				
$ 5.00				
$ 1.00				
	1862	**1863**	**1864**	**1865**

3. A pound of bacon costs about $3.15 today. If the price of bacon rose the same percent in the next three years that it rose between 1862 and 1865, what would the price be in 2010? $_____

Answer Key – Food for Thought

1. What percent did the price of a bushel of wheat increase from 1862 to 1864? Between 1862 and 1865?

Percent increase from 1862 to1864=Cost in 1864–Cost in 1862 = 25-3 = 22 = **733%**
                                        Cost in 1862   3   3

Percent increase from 1862 to1865=Cost in 1865-Cost in 1862 = 50-3 = 47 = **1567%**
                                        Cost in 1862   3   3

2. Graph the change in price of a bushel of corn between 1862 and 1865.

	1862	1863	1864	1865
$30.00				
$25.00				X
$20.00				X
$15.00			X X	
$10.00			X	
$ 5.00		X X		
$ 1.00	X	X		

3. A pound of bacon costs about $3.15 today. If the price of bacon rose the same percent in the next three years that it rose between 1862 and 1865, what would the price be in 2010?

Percent increase from 1862 to 1865 = Cost in 1865–Cost in 1862 = 7.50-.33 = 21.73
= **2173%**
                                        Cost in 1862   0.33

The price in 2010 = (3.15 x 2173%) + 3.15 = **$71.60**